

AVENEWS

Newsletter of THE NEW YORK AVENUE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, Washington, DC

‘Know Your Building’ Sept. 29 Congregational Sunday

by Molly Wagner

Among ancient air handling units, leaky pipes, and cracked mortar, children and adults laughed and learned.

Who knew that a photo scavenger hunt for chipped tiling, damaged doors, and splintered hardwood could be so much fun with the eight-and-under crowd! Tack on tours of an historic bell tower, air handling units on the church roof, and the massive boiler room, and you’ve got a crowd-pleaser for all ages.

September’s theme for Congregational Sunday (the 5th Sunday of a month) was “Get to Know Your Building.” Co-sponsored by the Nurture Committee and the Trustees, with support from archivist Dan Stokes, the congregation was encouraged to get to know the physical state of the NYAPC building, which is in dire need of repair.

Many who participated in the building tours and informational sessions stated that they would never be able to look at the facility the same way again.

The Trustees are contracting with a firm to make necessary repairs to the exterior of the building, and we as a church are

currently discussing what and how to repair and renovate in the interior.

Event highlights included:

- Reading the thoughts and memories participants wrote on copies of building floor plans, such as: “Got dressed for my wedding here;” “Sunday Night Live gatherings!” and “where my daughter took her first steps.”
- Climbing the ladder to the bell tower and the stairs to the roof...and Meg House saying, “I was *baptized* at NYAPC, and I’ve never been to either place.”
- Hearing at least one youth say, after looking at the “what needs repair?” photo scavenger hunt sheet: “Oh, that’s easy! I know where that is!” (They are paying attention!)
- Perusing the photos and artifacts that Dan Stokes pulled from the NYAPC



Highlights of the day included tours of the roof and bell-tower.



archive, including the elevator operator badge.

- Learning what the mistake is in the stained glass window....If you’d like to know, please check in with Cathy Schultheis.



Njoro Mission Trip Report—Aug. 4-18

by Rev. Beth Braxton

“I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ.” (Philippians 1:3-6)

Gratitude is the overwhelming attitude of the fifteen members and friends of The New York Avenue Presbyterian Church who journeyed six thousand plus miles to East Africa to the small town of Njoro, Kenya, for the purpose of building our relationship with and knowledge of the Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) program run by the P.C.E.A. Njoro Parish.

Grateful for starting the trip with a thorough perspective of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa ...

We were honored that both the Moderator David Gathanju and the Secretary General Rev. Festus Gitonga of the PCEA took time from their busy schedules to meet with our group. They discussed the

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Cuba Corner ...

by Marilyn J. Seiber

Meet Susana Guzman—Secretary for the First Presbyterian-Reformed Church of Havana

Susana first came to the First Presbyterian-Reformed Church of Havana when she visited with a friend 23 years ago. She stayed! She stood out as an active participant in the Young Adults group and became a teacher in the children's Sunday Bible School. She also worked at the Marianao Mission, a house worship mission of First Havana. For all this work, she was chosen to become an elder of the church. She represented First Havana on a visit to the Presbytery of Long Island in 2001.

For eight years, Susana has worked as secretary of the church, where she has become an excellent aide to the pastor, Rev. Héctor Méndez, attending to many matters involving the life of the church.

Susana has a degree in Economics and took part of her studies in Hungary in 1980. Currently she lives alone and has a daughter who lives in Spain, where she also received a degree in Economics.

First Havana Renovates!!!

Rev. Héctor Méndez reported in July that on April 30, First Havana initiated major repairs and renovation of the church and buildings. This includes renovating and painting the church and fixing the windows and the roof. They are making minor repairs and painting all the classrooms, offices, and meeting rooms; repairing, painting, or varnishing all the furniture; and replacing lamps and installing new lights in the entire building and repairing interior electrical cables.

Major renovations and construction include repair of all the bathrooms and plumbing in the building; construction of a new kitchen with work space, refrigerators, and a new gas stove; and rebuilding the snack and coffee room of the church.

Rev. Méndez writes, "We thank the Lord that we have been able to accomplish this work, always finding the appropriate people and the necessary materials at each step. We also thank God that we have been able to do this repair with the effort of our own local church which has assumed all the expenses. ... We have done it with joy and happiness and worked intensely and very willingly for the glory of God."

"Felicidades" to First Havana!

Cuban Council of Churches to Send Reps to Washington, D.C.

The Cuban Council of Churches will send five representatives to Washington, D.C., Nov. 19-21, to meet with members of Congress and their staffs, as well as administration officials. Their purpose is to advocate for more open and normalized relations between the United States and Cuba.



Susana Guzman

Members of the Cuban Council made a similar visit in November 2010, and since then restrictions on travel to Cuba have been eased. They hope that a similar visit this year will further promote better relations between our two governments.

Two Presbyterians will be on the delegation, and both have visited and worshipped at NYAPC. They are Rev. Joel Ortega Dopico, current president of the Cuban Council of Churches and pastor of the Dora E. Valentin Presbyterian Church in Varadero, and Dr. Reinerio Arce Valentin, current moderator of the Presbyterian-Reformed Church in Cuba and Rector of the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Matanzas.

Other members of the delegation are: Maria Yi, Friends Church (Quakers); Bishop Griselda Delgado, Episcopal Church; and Rev. Rhode Gonzalez, Pentecostal Church.

As part of their visit to Washington, NYAPC will host with Church of the Pilgrims Presbyterian Church a pot-luck din-

ner and reception for the visitors on Thursday, Nov. 21. It will be held at Church of the Pilgrims, and all are cordially invited to welcome our Cuban Council guests.

PC(USA) Regional Liaison for the Caribbean to Visit NYAPC

Rev. Jo Ella Holman, PC(USA) Regional Liaison for the Caribbean and Cuba, will visit NYAPC on Sunday, Nov. 17. She will be in Washington, D.C., in conjunction with the Cuban Council of Churches visit, and will worship at NYAPC for the first time, as well as give greetings at both services.

There will be a gathering for lunch with her after the service at noon, especially with members of the Board of Deacons, which has supported her work. All are invited to attend.

John Calvin Goes to Cuba!

by Marilyn J. Seiber

Covenant Presbyterian Church in Austin, Texas, has a partnership with Luyanó Presbyterian Church in Havana. Five years ago Covenant PC wanted to support a program of monthly music concerts, a means of evangelism by sharing classical music with the community. The first concert was scheduled for the Saturday before Reformation Sunday.

Prior to the concert, Rev. Dora Arce, pastor of Luyanó PC, sent out an invitation to the concert using her email list that included the neighborhood and church members, but inadvertently included a list of contacts, one of whom was the then-president of the Cuban Parliament, Ricardo Alarcón. He came to the concert.

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'Juan Calvin' in Havana

Small Group Fellowship at NYAPC

by Meg House

If you are looking for small group fellowship, NYAPC has several ongoing options for study and companionship. In addition, if you would like to be part of a book group or Bible study, contact Rev. Linda Lader, linda.lader@gmail.com, and we will work with you to find a group ... or help you form a new one.

Adult Sunday School Classes—Meet Sundays between worship services, 10-11. Details in weekly bulletin.

Committee Service—A variety of committees work together on projects for the church. It is a great way to get involved at whatever level and frequency works for you, and to get to know other members and friends. For information, contact Miriam Dewhurst, 703-560-0871, miriam.dewhurst@gmail.com.

Contemplative Prayer Group—Meets the second and fourth Thursday mornings at the church. Contact Tom Dunlap, shakescene@aol.com or Rev. Roger Gench, rfgench@mindspring.com.

Dinners for Nine—Meet with a different group of nine every two months for a potluck dinner at a member's home. Contact Miriam Dewhurst, 703-560-0871, miriam.dewhurst@gmail.com.

Parents' Group—Meets Sundays during Sunday School on the Park Level near the elevators. Contact Molly Wagner, mjohn94@yahoo.com.

Presbyterian Women's Circle—Meets monthly at members' homes. Contact Barbara Dornan, 703-971-9047, pbdornanp@aol.com.

Young Adults—Group of people primarily in their 20s and 30s who gather for fellowship, study and service. Contact Gordon Chaffin at galexanderchaffin@gmail.com.

Young Women's Bible Study—Meets once a month on Saturdays. Contact Kristin Ford, kristin.elisabeth.ford@gmail.com.



Cards for Kenya! NYAPC will be offering sets of folded cards for a donation of \$25 or more to the Kenya Program. These cards and other items will be available during the Alternative Christmas Giving this year (or earlier if needed)! Contact Matt Ford at mdford86@gmail.com for more details.

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The Newsletter of
The New York Avenue Presbyterian Church

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Next Issue and Editor: February, Fritz Von Fleckenstein
Deadline for Materials: Jan. 15, 2014

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The New York Avenue Presbyterian Church welcomes
all people into community, worship, service and leadership.

Share Your Ideas ...

What are your dreams for NYAPC? Are there ways you think our building could be improved to help fulfill and expand the missions and ministries of the church?

If so, the Mission & Ministry Task Force would love to hear from you! We are seeking creative ideas for what you envision for our future, and we will be offering a November listening session, an online discussion on our Facebook page, an email exchange, and open ears.

We want to hear from all who have dreams and a vision for NYAPC's future as we prepare to undertake renovations and make improvements to our building. So stay tuned for more details . . .

Rachel Browning
Brian Dewhurst
Tom Dunlap
Molly Lauer

Kenya

(Continued from p. 1)

history and the present organization of the PCEA, which has approximately four million members, over 1,000 congregations, and just 450 pastors! They expressed their gratitude to us for our coming and being with them.

We also visited the Church of the Torch, the oldest continuous Presbyterian Church in Kenya, active since 1907. We met with the chancellor and other administrators of the Presbyterian University, by contrast just seven years old. And we met with the superintendent for the PCEA Kikuyu Hospital, which has been in operation since 1908. We definitely saw in just one day how PC(USA) mission dollars are at work! We are proud!

Grateful for a bird's eye view of Kenyan economics ...

From Nakuru National Park and the Nairobi Giraffe Center to the Tea Research Foundation on the largest tea plantation in the world in Kericho, to the Kazuri Bead Factory, a Fair Trade Organization that provides single mothers with employment, we gleaned a broad and deep understanding of "what works" in Kenya.

We also walked through a section of Kibera, the second largest slum in Africa, where folks eke out a living any way they can; and we learned of the tension between Christians and Muslims there.

Sitting in traffic on highways and dirt roads alike, we experienced the slow pace of movement through infrastructure in this strong, developing country. (Our van driver was more excited about the new super-highway with the equivalent of a 35 mph speed limit the Chinese have helped build than DC drivers are about actually being able to drive the speed limit on the Beltway!)

Grateful for the overwhelming expression of welcome and hospitality by our Njoro counterparts ...

The members of the PCEA Njoro parish welcomed us to stay in their homes for three nights. The gifts of conversation and food were most gracious! It was such a special opportunity to experience the everyday lives and incredible hospitality of individual Kenyans. Some of us learned to cook Kenyan dishes; some of us learned new songs; some of us experienced anew the power of prayer.



Grateful for the unique opportunity to be with the 32 orphan and vulnerable children that NYAPC helps support ...

We ran a one-day, all-day Bible School Program with worship—centered on the Good Samaritan story from Luke 10—and then followed with four activities: dance, singing, crafts and games.

Beth and Bob Braxton and Shamika Bradley led dance; Martha Davis, Jim Turner and Sarah Williamson led singing; Molly Lauer, Marsha Renwanz, Carol Casperson and Matt Ford led the crafts; and Karen Milam, Kristin Ford and Takele Habibu led the games. Laura Turner was

taking photographs; and our nurse Susan Kipp floated, helping where needed.

On Sunday afternoon after worship and lunch, we had more informal time with the children, playing games, singing and dancing. We had one more time with the children on Wednesday after school. Around 4 o'clock the children gathered at the church and each designed a T-shirt and painted their design with fabric markers and puffy paint.

Many wanted to make their shirts like our professionally designed T-shirts by Matt Ford, so he did a modified design that they could copy. We had cake and bottled sodas and handed out to each child "bandana gifts" containing a small "The Message" New Testament, tablet, pencil, toothpaste, soap, and candy.

Being with the children and experiencing their friendly and shy ways, their love, and their questions was really the highlight of our time in Kenya!

In addition to being with the children, we had an afternoon of school visits. These visits were eye-openers to the challenges of education in Kenya, particularly at the primary level where some of the teachers have as many as 60 or 70 pupils in one class! One secondary school principal told us that one-third of his student population were orphans.

Grateful for the progress of the Njoro chicken project ...

All the OVC guardians have now received chickens to help support their families. We were able to visit several of the homes to see the progress, which varies greatly. Some families have done quite well and are able to support the

children's secondary school fees with the money they earn from selling eggs and excess chickens! Others have lost chickens to theft and predatory animals. Still others persevered by bringing their chickens into their homes every evening to protect them from predators and thieves. All of the families were grateful to have been provided with the chickens.

Grateful for the dedication of the Saturday teachers: Monica and John and the OVC Committee in Njoro ...

The six members on the OVC committee were available to us, and they also housed us. Francis Muchemi is chair; Jeremiah Nduyu is the coordinator of the OVC program; Philip Mathenge is the secretary; Esther Kinuthia is the church treasurer and helps keep the books; and Millicent Githaiga is the patron. We had a very productive meeting of the two committees (Njoro and NYAPC) on the last day before we departed Njoro.

Grateful for Alice Wainaina and the opportunity to connect with Presbyterian University faculty and students ...

Our Njoro Team had the opportunity to meet with Alice Wainaina, who is a social worker in Nairobi and was our consultant for the OVC project. She did an on-the-ground evaluation of the OVC program in 2012 and met with us to review her report. She was gracious in fielding our questions and is available for further contact. We also had the surprise opportunity to talk with the chancellor of the Presbyterian University. She was most open to



the possibility of placing a student intern to work with the Njoro OVC program!

Grateful for the faith of the Njoro church members and the grace of God that has joined us in this fruitful relationship ...

Sunday worship was central to our time in Njoro. Not only the expression of singing and prayers in their homes, but the two Sunday worship services were

filled with the Spirit and ran for several hours! Many groups sang, including the "NYAPC traveling choir." It was Brigade Sunday across the PCEA that Sunday, and though Rev. Beth Braxton had been asked to prepare a sermon on 2 Timothy 2, particularly geared to their young people, there was a special request for her and the group to deliver an encore performance of their Saturday Bible School drama of the Good Samaritan for Sunday worship, which we did. It is our common bond in Christ that joins us as partners in mission!

Grateful for the experience of grace and giving ...

The overwhelming characteristic of the Kenyans we met is their giving nature. They gave of themselves to make us feel at home. They arranged all our transportation at a very reasonable price and also arranged our stay at the Egerton University housing, again for a very reasonable charge. They fed us—and fed us—with delicious Kenyan food and lots of tea times! We never lacked for nourishment! On the last day of our visit, there were words of grace and gifts of handbags and T-shirts and tea for all! Then, to our utter amazement as we were boarding the vans to head back to Nairobi, the pastor, Rev. George Kariuki, brought from his house bouquet after bouquet of roses—red, white, yellow—a dozen and a half for each person! You can imagine the glorious visual and aromas all the way to Nairobi!!

Grateful for the members of The New York Avenue Presbyterian Church, who support this OVC program partnership and grateful to have been blessed with excellent team members.

*Gratefully submitted,
Rev. Dr. Beth Braxton
September 2013*



You can see a gallery of many pictures of the 2013 Kenya Mission on the NYAPC website. Just click on this link: <http://www.nyapc.org/picture-gallery>.

The Njoro Mission Team will lead two adult ed classes Nov. 17 and 24.

Iraqi International Peacemaker Visits NYAPC

by Marilyn J. Seiber

Dr. Zuhair Fathallah, PC(USA) international peacemaker from Basrah, Iraq, visited The New York Avenue Presbyterian Church and National Capital Presbytery Oct. 4-9.

At the invitation of NYAPC's Peace and Justice Committee, Dr. Fathallah came to Washington, D.C., for the first time—and was greeted by a closed government that meant no Capitol tour or museum and monument visits. However, he was able to see the National Cathedral, Supreme Court, and Arlington National Cemetery, when he wasn't giving presentations about the National Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Iraq and specifically his Presbyterian church in Basrah.

Dr. Fathallah is a plastic surgeon with a private practice and is also assistant professor of plastic surgery at the Basrah Medical College and a consulting surgeon at the Basrah Teaching Hospital. At the same time, he "pastored" his church as an elder for nine years while the church was without an ordained pastor.

Since January 2013, Elder Zuhair was relieved of his extra church duties when Rev. Magdy Rafaat, an ordained Presbyterian pastor from Egypt, was called to the National Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Basrah. His is one of three Presbyterian churches in Iraq with a Presbyterian pastor, the other two being in Baghdad and Kirkuk. The church in Mosul is closed, but ten people are worshipping in homes, and a second Assyrian Presbyterian Church in Baghdad has joined with the other Baghdad church. A new Presbyte-

rian church in Erbil will be opening soon. In 2001, the five congregations in Baghdad, Mosul, Basrah, and Kirkuk were recognized by the Iraqi Government as the Assembly of the National Evangelical Presbyterian Churches in Iraq.

While in Washington, D.C., Dr. Fathallah made presentations to the Presbytery's Global Mission Network at NYAPC and to a group of church representatives organized by PC(USA)'s Office of Public Witness. He also met with National Capital Presbytery General Presbyter Rev. Dr. G. Wilson Gunn, and a representative of the Presbyterian Outreach Foundation.

At NYAPC Sunday worship services on Oct. 6, World Communion Sunday, Dr. Fathallah served communion at the early service and brought greetings from his church and the National Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Iraq. During "Time with Children," he showed the NYAPC children photographs of his church and the children in his Sunday School. NYAPC children had made drawings and cards for the children at his Basrah church, which Rev. Katie Cashwell presented to him.

The Peace and Justice Committee with the Diaconal Ministers organized a reception lunch for Dr. Fathallah after the 11:00 a.m. worship service, and Dr. Fathallah gave a Powerpoint presentation about the history and work of his church.

Dr. Fathallah reported that, because of geography and Basrah's location, the city has been greatly affected by the three recent wars: Iran-Iraq and two Gulf Wars. As a result, the size of his church has declined from close to 300 to 45 people today. A new church was re-



cently built and opened in November 1997 with a lit and glowing cross on the outside tower that can be seen for miles.

Despite the low number of members, his church has three effective outreach missions to the community that "stay inside" the church and do not conflict with rules against Christian proselytizing. First is a kindergarten of 250 children, all but two of whom are Muslim. He says that the kindergarten teaches God's love and has made a discernible impact on the children's behavior and on their families. Second is a new FM radio station with a 20-mile radius that initially was to be transmitted to Christian churches but has become popular throughout the city with its hymns and messages of God's love. Third is a free pharmacy that provides medicines and prescription drugs to those in need and who have prescriptions from their doctors. Dr. Fathallah hopes to open a Medical Day Center that will allow people to receive free medical care on an outpatient basis.



At the end of his presentation on Sunday, Rev. Cashwell presented Dr. Fathallah with a copy of Capital Witness, and Dr. Fathallah gave to NYAPC a cross hand-carved from mahogany from their old church.

History Happens . . . at NYAPC

Eleanor Pratt

by Edith Snyder and Marilyn J. Seiber

As part of the NYAPC History Committee's "Bicentennial Interviews Project," Marilyn Seiber and Edie Snyder interview long-time NYAPC members for the archives files. They interviewed Eleanor Pratt on August 18, 2013, for this project and for the article below.

Eleanor Pratt first arrived at The New York Avenue Presbyterian Church 57 years ago this October. She came to the church with her mother, Agnes Pratt, and aunt, Winifrede Rogers, to hear Dr. George M. Docherty preach. Dr. Docherty impressed Eleanor, but the choir and the invitation in the bulletin to become part of it proved irresistible. Shortly after their visit, Eleanor, Agnes, and Winifrede left the Clarendon Presbyterian Church, where the family had been members since settling in Arlington in the 1920s.

Eleanor joined the NYAPC choir and sang for almost 30 years. She became one of the first tutors in Community Club. She served on the Board of Trustees from 1975 to 1977 and on the Board of Deaconesses, now the Board of Diaconal Ministers, from 2005 to 2010. Since 2004, Eleanor has volunteered regularly in the church office, assisting with various financial tasks, from writing checks and reconciling bank statements to preparing securities litigation claims. "Throughout the years, through all the changes that come in life, the church is always here; it has been and is an anchor for me and so many others," she says.

One of a few members of NYAPC who is a Washington-area native, Eleanor grew up just across the Potomac River on Hartford and then Danville Streets in Arlington, in homes she shared with her parents and brother. Eleanor graduated from Washington-Lee High School and went on to study business and economics at Mary Washington College in Fredericksburg. She ultimately attended George Washington University, where she earned her master's degree in accounting.

After college, Eleanor was hired as a clerk at the Federal Reserve Board, later earning the designation "economist." Her goal, however, was to become a certified public accountant, so she left the government for a small, family-owned public accounting firm to work the required four years in the field to earn her CPA certificate. While women had begun to gain ground in financial professions by the 1970s, Eleanor lost her position with the firm because, she was told, one of the larger clients to whom she had been as-

signed "didn't want a woman working for them."

She then took a job with International Bank, a holding company where she worked from 1974 to 1986. "It was a wonderful job where I learned a great deal about tax practice," she says. From her office window at 17th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Eleanor could see the White House and remembers watching President Gerald Ford's dogs cavorting around the mansion's lawn. She left the company in 1986 to do tax work on her own, and retired in 2007.

A Love of Music

While attending Washington-Lee High School, Eleanor first discovered her lifelong love of music and wanted nothing more than to be part of the choir there. "But it was very difficult to get into that choir, which was led by Florence Booker," she recalls. Eleanor had to wait until she attended Mary Washington College to become part of a choir. It is no wonder, then, that the music at NYAPC had such appeal for Eleanor that first Sunday when she heard Director of Music Stephen H. Prussing lead the church's choir of some 100 voices.

The Friday following her first visit to NYAPC, Eleanor went to choir rehearsal, was warmly welcomed, and took her place in the chorus as a soprano. Being part of the choir "changed my life. It was like a college course in music, and I made so many friends"—among them Alice French, Nancy Sturtevant, and Peggy Evans, all of whom joined on that same night. Peggy gave Eleanor a ride home and has been a friend ever since.

Eleanor's passion for music at NYAPC includes the work of its organists. She especially remembers William Watkins, who left NYAPC shortly after Eleanor's arrival to become director of music and organist at Georgetown Presbyterian Church. He offered the gift of a parting recital to the church as part of the evening worship service on Oct. 14, 1956. Charl-



ton Meyer replaced Watkins as organist, and Eleanor recalls as inspirational "his marvelous last movement of Beethoven's 7th symphony." Still another favorite musician at NYAPC was Henry Booker, who followed Meyer as organist. "Henry could play hymns so that anyone would want to sing, and that continues to this day with Stan [Engbretson]," says Eleanor.

Through the years, Eleanor participated in the choir's musicals that were produced at the church, chiefly under Steve Prussing—somewhere between 20 and 30 shows. In particular, she remembers "Our Town," in which Eleanor and her long-time friend Peggy played the first and second "dead women" sitting in chairs in the "graveyard."

Notable Preaching

Eleanor appreciates the "notable preaching" at NYAPC, particularly the series Rev. Edmund Jones offered on the seven deadly sins, sermons she found "astounding." She considered Dr. Docherty a classicist, always alluding to poetry and literature. Rev. Wesley Baker came after Rev. Jones, and "was exactly what NYAPC needed at that time." She characterizes Rev. Rob Craig as a healer and thinks Rev. Roger Gench's sermons are both "terrific" and challenging intellectually.

Eleanor also often thinks of NYAPC's "cloud of witnesses—like ghosts in the choir loft" and three, in particular, who Rev. Docherty always considered true saints of the church: Thelma Odom, NYAPC mission worker from 1961 to 1971, and faithful members Gilbert Anderson and George Bergquist.

Eleanor believes their legacy lives on in the work of the church today. "This church serves so many people, day in and day out," through its many ministries and outreach programs—hundreds of people each week, she explains. "Not long ago, the church held a fire drill when I was working in the office. I could not believe how many people poured out of the building! It made Sundays seem like quiet days."

John Calvin

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Because the next day was Reformation Sunday, Rev. Arce welcomed the gathering to the concert and talked about the meaning of the Reformation and the 500th anniversary of the July 10, 1509, birth of John Calvin—or Juan Calvino—in the Cuban context! She described Calvin as an advocate for the poor and a reformer.

Mr. Alarcón was taken by this and gave his personal cell phone and office number to Rev. Arce to find out more about church outreach through music, the Reformation, and Juan Calvino in particular.

If We Can Have John Lennon ...

Rev. Arce then had several meetings with Mr. Alarcón and his staff where she suggested to him that Cuba should have a statue of Juan Calvino. Her pitch: “If we can have a statue of John Lennon in a public park, why can’t we have a statue honoring the great Reformer Juan Calvino?”

Mr. Alarcón would consider this based on the relevance of Calvin to the Cuban people and to the poor. Rev. Arce subsequently received a phone call from Mr. Alarcón’s office informing her that Dr. Eusebio Leal, historian of the City of Havana, had been instructed to determine the public park in Havana’s Historic Center in which a bust of John Calvin would be located.

The Executive Director of the John Calvin Society in Geneva convinced Italian sculptor Francois Bonnot to create the bust. Former Pastor of Luyanó PC, Rev. Dr. Carlos Emilio Ham, then at the World Council of Churches in Geneva, helped with securing financing for the project.

On Oct. 31, 2009, the bust was dedicated in a park across from the downtown train station with standing room only. It was the culmination of dedicated work of the Presbyterian-Reformed Church in Cuba, women in France associated with Reformation history, and Dr. Ham in Geneva. Keynote speakers were the Rev. Dr. Isabelle Graessle, director of the International Reformation Museum of Geneva, and Cuban theologian Sergio Arce Martínez.

Juan Calvino has now been residing in Cuba for more than three years.



PC(USA) Cuba Partners Network Meets in Houston

by Marilyn J. Seiber

The annual PC(USA) Cuba Partners Network met in Houston, Texas, Sept. 18-21, with the theme, “Toward becoming a community of mission practice.”

Several “records” were broken: NYAPC had three representatives; seven Cuban representatives attended; 35 U.S. Presbyterian Churches were represented, including two from National Capital Presbytery; and over 60 people attended. Anne Laroche, Betsy Merritt, and Marilyn Seiber represented NYAPC.

The meeting’s theme, “Toward becoming a community of mission practice,” was based on Presbyterian World Mission’s recently adopted “new paradigm” for doing mission together as developed by the two PC(USA) Dallas Consultations in 2010 and 2012. The Network’s purpose was to understand World Mission’s new approach to mission and partnerships and to incorporate its principles into the discussions and issues that U.S.-Cuba partnerships address.

In addition to exploring and understanding this theme within the context of Bible study and theology, the Network examined “Communication and Its Challenges in Partnership and Community,” especially difficult in a country with often limited availability of computer technology and the internet, and where language barriers add to the challenge.

Another theme was “Money Matters and Its Challenges in Partnership and Community,” an issue that has the potential to create dependency and unequal relationships, as well as challenges of fairness within the Presbyterian Church in Cuba.

A third theme was Advocacy and how U.S. partners could more systematically advocate for better U.S.-Cuba relations. For this topic, Marilyn Seiber invited Emily Chow from the Latin America Working Group in Washington, D.C., to give a seminar on doing advocacy work together.

Finally, the Network considered “Know Our Realities” with presenters from Cuba and the U.S. providing insight to social, economic, and political changes in their country and the implications for partnerships now and in the future.

The relaxed atmosphere of the Cenacle Retreat Center allowed delegates to get to know each other, along with the new technique of “relational conversations,” introduced by NYAPC resulting from its training in community organizing work this past summer.

We look forward to expanded participation at next year’s network meeting at the Cenacle Retreat Center in Chicago.

NYAPC Members Visit Holy Land

Several NYAPC members recently traveled to Israel and Palestine as part of an interfaith delegation. Since returning they have shared their stories through the church's adult Christian Education program, the [National Capital Presbytery's Global Mission Network](#), and the denomination's [Israel Palestine Mission Network](#).

This poem (box) was inspired by the experiences and memories of that trip. For more information on the DC-based sponsoring organization, Interfaith Peace-Builders, see www.ifpb.org.

The trip was blessed to have a filmmaker, Ralph Watkins, join the trip as one of the delegates. He produced this 29 minute documentary about the delegation:

<http://vimeo.com/77340032>

A Berlin Wall

June 2013

A capital divided and not the world's only one.
Man has produced many examples
And while some disappear,
Others are redone.

I see a new wall dividing people and the land.
Opposing groups on sidewalk corners, urging others to take a stand.
But for what? And on whose behalf? I wonder to myself.
Is it my conflict? Need I worry, for their safety, education, or health?

I am but a visitor, here and gone
Within a fortnight.
But they are there forever,
What of the resident and refugee's plight?

For it is hard for me to understand,
A system where citizens are not the same.
And harder yet to understand,
A wall dividing that, which is the same.

Security is professed,
And words reference economic progress,
But on one side I see revelry,
On the other oppression and duress.

Geography has conspired and formed the earth just so.
And man has divided into groups, although,

Humanity will emerge if only one were to see,
How one's neighbor is actually living,
And how it otherwise might be.



Advent at NYAPC

The Advent season often rushes by in a whirlwind of activity. Here are a few ways (in addition to worship!) you might observe the season (see the calendar in the box for more).

Daily Devotionals—Start a devotional practice using the Advent Meditation Book, to be distributed by Dec. 1. Also available online.

Sing a Cantata—Come to Thursday choir rehearsals and sing with the choir for the season. Come to the 4th floor at 7:15 pm to learn a Bach Christmas Cantata and enjoy new arrangements of Christmas carols.

Join us in Intergenerational Fellowship—Come to Cookies & Caroling after the Christmas Pageant on Dec. 15.

Shop Smart—Stop by the Alternative Christmas Store to find meaningful gifts for the people on your list. Sundays beginning Nov. 24.



Mark Your Calendars

Nov. 14 - Noon Concert - US Army Brass with Stan Engebretson on Organ.

Nov. 24 - Alternative Christmas Store opens at NYAPC.

Nov. 28 - Thanksgiving - Worship service at 10 am

Dec. 1 - First Sunday of Advent - Pick up your Advent devotional books to use at home during the season.

Dec. 8 - Special Music - J.S. Bach Christmas Cantata - 8:45 and 11 am.

Dec. 15 - Christmas Pageant - One Service at 10 am, Cookies and Caroling in Peter Marshall Hall at 11 am.

Dec. 20 - Noon Worship. "Longest Night Service" in remembrance of the homeless who died during 2013.

Dec. 22 - Fourth Sunday of Advent - Service of Lessons and Carols - one service at 10 am.

Dec. 24 - Christmas Eve Services at 5:30 and 8:00.

Dec. 29 - One Service at 10 am.

